

HB 504

Chuck Wyman, Sec/Treasurer, Board of Trustees Sourdough Fire Department.

3 Years on the board. 20 years in Bozeman, 4th Generation Montanan

1. This is a "level the playing field" measure to unify rules for Districts and Service Areas.
2. Financial Efficiency is critical to operating a Fire Service Area and Fire District because funding is limited, often questioned and begrudgingly approved.
 - a. It's a mandatory and critical community service.
 - b. As fire service areas and districts grow, needs and customer expectations change.
 - c. It's a take care of your neighbor service.
 - d. It's a service you as a community member never want to see at your house --Everyone likes to see the snowplow go by but not a fire truck in your driveway.
3. When response is needed; that's when you want to see a professional! A trained focused professional who can immediately set to work to solve your emergency.
4. Although predominately volunteer, certain expenses are emerging and are somewhat unavoidable:
 - a. Paid positions such as Chiefs, Admin/Bookkeeping/Command Shifts leaders.
 - b. Positions requiring training for Firefighter and EMS certifications.
 - c. Continuing education to meet local, state and national standards.

- d. Specialized apparatus; Engines/Tenders/Ladder Trucks/EMS vehicles/Wildland Fire Trucks/Utility vehicles/Command Vehicles.
 - e. Station costs supplies and maintenance.
5. Record keeping /managing current inefficiencies.
- a. Currently we maintain three sets of books and write at least two checks for every bill to keep financial records straight.
 - b. Three audits because of three separate budgets (Total cost \$21000 vs \$7000).
 - c. Duplicate record keeping/filings.
 - d. Employee payroll is split and recalculated between departments.
 - e. We have two work comp policies.
 - f. Duplicate accounts with vendors and suppliers can lead to confusion and possible errors.
6. Consolidating can provide neighboring fire departments the opportunity to spread the costs over more taxpayers while reducing duplicate positions, vendor services, training, and equipment, therefore improving service, response, flexibility.
7. Financial inefficiencies cost the taxpayer's money! With consolidation we can make great use of economies of scale.
8. HB 504 provides the opportunity to allow boards of not just Fire Districts, but Fire Service areas also to join together to provide their constituents with a more efficient emergency response structure and ultimately better service.

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